

Dragon Newsletter

December 25, 2005 Edition



Happy Holidays From Camp Taji, Iraq!!!

Dear Dragon Families,

The Dragons all made it here to Camp Taji safely! We spent several weeks as Camp Buehring, Kuwait where we received our equipment from the ships, conducted our final training, and prepared our equipment for movement to Iraq. We test fired our weapons, conducted convoy live-fire exercises, conducted aerial gunnery, and practiced flying in desert terrain that was similar to Iraq. The Soldiers did an outstanding job and we were all confident in our training and equipment as we came "across the berm".

We have been busy here getting settled and learning the ropes from the unit that we are relieving, 3-3 Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB), from the 3rd Infantry Division at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA. We will officially take the mission before the New Year and they will return home to their families. Our pilots are already flying missions around the clock and everyone is focused on accomplishing the task at hand to the best of their ability and returning home safely.

We will soon reach an important milestone for the Soldiers and their families. Starting mid-January, the first twenty Soldiers will come home on

Environmental Morale Leave (EML). The last Soldiers will go on leave in late August and early September. We will



Sign at Camp Buehring gate

only have a couple of weeks notice on the number of slots each month that we can distribute to our Soldiers. Once a Soldier arrives their personnel assistance point in the United States, he or she will be booked on a flight to their destination. So look forward to seeing familiar faces returning home soon.

We did receive, and will continue to receive, the mail that was sent to APO AE 09378. The additional information that was provided at a later time, such as Unit # and the additional digits on the zip code, will expedite the delivery and should be used.

Again, the mail that was sent to APO AE 09378 before we had that additional information was not lost. I apologize for the confusion. Currently, letter mail makes it here in about 10 days from the states. Packages may take a little

longer to arrive.

The battalion has an internet café that the Soldiers have access to 24 hours a day, seven days a week and the computers are equipped with webcams. There are also a limited number of government phones which can be used for morale calls. In addition, there is nothing like good old fashioned mail.

There is a saying in the Army that we recruit Soldiers and retain families. We are very fortunate that many Soldiers and their families have made the decision to continue to serve our great Nation. Twenty-five Soldiers in the battalion have reenlisted since we deployed. The total enlistment bonuses awarded to those Soldiers was in excess of \$241,000. In addition, these bonuses are tax free. SSG Bruce and SPC Patterson even got to recite their Oath of Enlistment in the back of a Blackhawk helicopter flying over Kuwait (yes, they would have rather done it in a Apache). We look forward to many more reenlistments while we are here.

We have already had several new Soldiers join the unit since we left Fort Hood, and others who are preparing to join us. We have a few that stayed behind for the birth of children and are now with us. Congratulations to the Sauers,

the Dawsons, the Martinezs, and SGT Felter on the birth of their children.

I appreciate the sacrifices that all of the families have made so far during this deployment. You are on our minds and give us strength to do what we have to do here. We plan to publish this newsletter monthly, but delays may occur based on mission, so please contact your Family Readiness Group Leader (FRG) if you have immediate questions. If the question can't be answered or issue resolved through the FRG or the rear detachment, Susan will get the issue or question to me and I will respond as soon as possible.



Happy New Year!
LTC Mike Rapavi
Dragon 06



Sign entering Camp Taji



Alpha Company "Vipers"

Greetings from Viper 06!

To the Viper Family, greetings from Taji, Iraq! I hope this letter finds everyone doing well. A Company is one month down on the deployment, and what an eventful month it has been! The entire company arrived safely to Camp Buehring, Kuwait after a marathon 19-hour flight filled with airline food and continuous movies.

Once at Camp Buehring the Vipers settled down for one month of training and flying, all in preparation for the eventual move to Iraq. The Soldiers went to the ranges to qualify on their weapons, attended classes on First Aid, Improvised Explosive Device awareness, and cultural training.

In addition to all of this training, the crew chiefs and maintenance test pilots had to get the aircraft off of the ship and prepared for flying after their long journey from the States. The pilots conducted environmental training, where they learned how to fly in a desert environment. Then the company participated in an aerial gunnery exercise to ensure that the aircraft were all functioning properly.

Much credit goes to the entire company for dealing with less than ideal conditions while conducting aircraft maintenance. Everyone got to know their neighbor better than they probably wanted to due to the tight living conditions in the large community tents!

During the down time, CW2 Swetz supplied almost everyone with DVD movies, while WO1 Harper provided constant laughs (mostly at his own expense!)

Many soldiers used their spare time to get back in shape at the gym. Thanks

to some of the crew chiefs, SPC Bender found that a person could carry at least sixty Power Nutrition Bars and not even know it!

Thanksgiving was difficult as everyone missed being with their loved ones; however, the dining facility made a dinner that was fantastic, and everyone left bloated and satisfied.

As December rolled around, the company had to endure the longer lines for meals, internet, phones and pretty much everything else. Everyone stayed in good spirits, but we were all ready for the move north. 1SG O'Donnell, SGT Woodburn, SPC Gollnick, and SPC Peters were the first ones to head north in a convoy. Next came some of the crew chiefs who flew north on C130 aircraft. The pilots and a few of the crew chiefs were last to leave on helicopters around the middle of the month to travel to our new home at Camp Taji.

Taji was a sight for sore eyes for most as the dining facility, PX, and living conditions were everything that was promised. Everyone is now getting

settled into their "containers" buying or acquiring furniture and other amenities for their new homes. The company hit the ground running, going straight into missions, and learning the ropes from the unit we are replacing. Most guys had little time to unpack and get settled before they started flying. Also, congratulations go to CW2 Larabee on his promotion and to SGT Smith on making his points for Staff Sergeant. Both are well deserved.

As the Holiday Season is upon us, we are all missing our families and wishing we could be there to share this special time with them. However, duty calls and the work the Vipers are doing over here is invaluable to our nation and to rebuilding this country. On behalf of all of the Vipers, know that our thoughts and prayers are with all of those we love who we cannot be with at this time of the year.

"ATTACK" CPT Timothy Measner

Alpha Company poses for a group photo on November 10, 2005, hours before boarding the plane to Kuwait.





Bravo Company "Raptors"

The door of the white tour bus opened and the Soldiers in front of me spilled out like beans pouring from a can. I stepped forward, off of the last stair, and was greeted by the familiar sound of sand and rock grating beneath my boot. Familiar. Entirely, too familiar. November 14th, 2005. I, along with all but one of the remaining Raptors, had arrived at Camp Udairi, a desert outpost now known as Camp Buehring. The permanence of the sign at the entrance to the camp told me that this place was here to stay for quite a while. Bravo Company, after an 18 month vacation from Iraq was back in town.

Since our arrival, Bravo Company has been extremely busy integrating itself into a mature combat theater. Falling in on a pre-established training program, known as reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI), the Company took part in a series of world class training events and classes. The openness of the desert, availability of training resources, and ranges with fewer restrictions allowed the company to test their skills in events such as aerial gunnery, close combat attack training, and close quarters small arms training. Additionally, the company participated in test firing individual weapon systems, and learned about and developed an under-

standing for the complex theater in which we are about to operate.

Bravo Company led the way in the air as the battalion's aviators conducted their environmental familiarization training. With the company providing the vast majority of aircraft for training, Raptor crew chiefs worked 24 hour operations preparing, launching, recovering, and resetting aircraft for their next flight. Our pilots performed extremely well in one of the



SGT Trammell and SPC Kenney, aka "The Wondertwins," enjoy a Thanksgiving cigarette in Kuwait.

most dynamic aerial gunnery scenarios developed and executed in recent attack aviation history. The friends and family of Bravo Com-

pany have a lot to be proud of. Each Raptor has performed well, working towards the accomplishment of our training tasks and preparing for our movement into Iraq. We are well trained, motivated and ready for what lies ahead.

For those of you that may not have heard, 1st LT Shouse and 1st LT Sidwell, the Battalion S-1, wed on 10 November, just prior to departing for Iraq. CW2 Sauer and his wife, CW2 Sauer, saw the birth of their child Brian, the newest addition of the Raptor family. Lastly, a special congratulations to 1SG Lambert who was selected for promotion to E-8, and now wears the rank for the position he has held for the last nine months.

To our loved ones, we wish you a wonderful holiday season. While we can not be together this year, each of you will be in our thoughts and prayers. It is our safe return to you that motivates our daily actions and will guide us through our longest days.

- Raptor 06

CPT Jeffrey Papaleo

Below left: Bravo Company in full battle rattle at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Below right: CPT Papaleo reads his morning paper on his new up-armored HMMWV



Charlie Company "Sidewinders"



Season's greetings! While the Soldiers of C Company wish that they could be spending the holiday season at home with their families, their hearts and minds are with you all. Even though it is always difficult to spend this time away from the ones we love, our efforts over the last month in Kuwait and the last year at Fort Hood have been vital to the job we are now doing in Iraq.

While in Kuwait, the Sidewinders participated in many training events, including a close quarters combat range, a convoy live fire exercise, aircrew environmental qualifications and a Table VI gunnery. Although there was a lot to keep us occupied, not all of our time spent in Kuwait was work. While the Sidewinders were busy, we made sure that Soldiers were given as much time as possible to rest and prepare themselves for the upcoming time in Iraq.

After successfully deploying the battalion from Kuwait to Iraq, the time has now come for the real work to begin. The demands on both Soldiers and aviators alike are daunting, but I have no doubt that the C Company Sidewinders are up to the task. They excelled at Fort Hood, Fort Carson, and Fort Irwin; I am certain that they will continue to excel over the duration of our stay here. In preparation for this deployment, we have trained a great deal, but the dividends are apparent in both attitude and aptitude. Our Soldiers are among the best trained in the Army, and they are demonstrating that every day.

It is still my honor and pleasure to be their leader on this field of battle. I am proud of them all and I look forward to continuing to serve alongside them.

Most Sincerely,

CPT Mark A. Greene
Sidewinder 06



At left: 1SG Hampton, SGT Ross, SPC Bramblett, and PFC Jernigan gear up for their convoy north from Camp Buehring, Kuwait to Taji, Iraq in early December.

Below (from left to right): CW3 McGhee, CPT Greene, 1SG Hampton, and CW3 Talbott at Camp Buehring.





Delta Company "Dawgs"

Greetings from Taji! I hope all of the Dawg family members are enjoying their holiday season. I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We are settled at our new home and the tempo is beginning to increase every day. For most of the Dawgs, that means at least a twelve hour work day, everyday. Furthermore, the guard requirement here is robust, so we are executing our fair share of guard shifts all over the camp. That is just one of the necessary tasks we must complete in order to remain safe while doing our work here on the aircraft. At the pace we will keep over the next eleven months, our time here should pass by rather quickly.

The Army is taking good care of us with an array of facilities to make life just a little easier. As I am sure all of you have heard, we are living in small trailers instead of tents. The dining facility here is exceptional and the biggest concern is becoming overweight. There are the usual PX and fast food establishments... who could have predicted three years ago that we would be eating Cinnabons in Iraq? Laundry is a great benefit here. There are ample locations to turn in laundry and it comes back in three days in good shape. Although this is still a dangerous place, the quality of life here is outstanding and I assure you that your soldier is in good hands.

One benefit of deployment is the opportunity to re-enlist and receive a tax-free bonus. We have re-enlisted numerous soldiers since we arrived in theatre and I would like to thank them for their continued service to our nation in this time of conflict. As I tell them every time we perform a re-enlistment or promotion, that is one the most rewarding parts of my job. Watching these great soldiers get promoted or re-enlist is what our Army is all about. Thanks to all of the family members who support what we do.

We also promoted SSG Omari to Sergeant First Class and laterally appointed SPC Rodriguez to Corporal. Congratulations! In order to congratulate SFC "Pretty Boy" Omari appropriately, the Dawgs captured him and gave him a quick haircut with some clippers. Since he was rather fond of his hair, that was a significant event for him. We have had others who were on the receiving end of the Dawgs having a little fun. 1SG Belle had a birthday while we were in Kuwait. What a great opportunity for the Dawgs to "legally" take their frustrations out on Dawg 7. He had to change his uniform after that round of fun!

In other news, SGT "accident waiting to happen" Young should be free from all of his bandages by the time his mid-tour leave comes around. We may have to lock him in his room before he really hurts himself. By the time mid-tour comes around for SFC "Hans" Jewell, he and SFC "Frans" Lizama will be doing bodybuilding as part of the Wayne Newton USO show. That should be a good show!

As we continue to occupy the camp here and take over more of the functions, connectivity with home should increase. With the privilege of almost constant contact with our families, there comes a great responsibility to safeguard sensitive information. I urge you and your Soldier to practice OPSEC while talking over the phone or the internet. I assure you, someone unfriendly is listening to or reading everything that is said. Please help us out with that and keep us all just a little safer.

With Christmas in just a few short days, the Soldiers are in good spirits. We intend to take some time to observe the holiday and then get back to work. Staying busy is the best cure for being homesick on a holiday away from home. I want to personally thank you once again for your untiring commitment to your loved ones. They are truly great Americans and I am humbled to command such a fine group of Soldiers.

Happy Holidays and all the best to each of you.

Dawg 06

CPT Corey James

Delta Dawgs spent many hours at the port unloading aircraft from Navy ships in Kuwait.



Echo Company "Rough Riders"



Camels were a common sight for E Co soldiers during their convoys through Kuwait and Iraq.

Greetings from Roughrider 6!

Hello from Camp Taji, Iraq. I hope this comes to all of you in the best of spirits during the holidays. We are finally set and assuming missions as of 23 December 2005; we do have missions going on in different areas around Baghdad but all goes well there also.

Since arriving in Kuwait, we have reenlisted 11 personnel (SGT Mejia, SGT Arevalo, SGT Killfirst, CPL Reeder, PFC Gilmore, SSG Dunham, PFC Statz, SPC Beck, SGT Eidy, SPC Castenada, and SPC Ambelas). Congratulations and thanks to the Soldiers and their families for making the choice to stay in a little longer to defend this great nation.

Also, during this time we have promoted several deserving soldiers (SPC Eady to SGT, CPL Mayle to SGT, CPL Jones to SGT, and SPC McKitrick, Warner to SGT). Thank you to these soldiers for the willingness to step up and take greater responsibility in joining the NCO corps.

During our time so far we have performed two convoys (one from Kuwait to Camp Taji, and another to and from CSC Scania). The first took about 4 days but only about 7 hours of driving. The second took 5 days with only about 4 hours driving; the time was due to restrictions on movement during the elections in Iraq.

We have several events scheduled for the Christmas timeframe to include a little party and exchanging of gifts. Most of you at home are doing great things in providing gifts, care packages, and letters from home, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK. Please be patient with us as we continue to work through difficulties with communication systems here, we will continue to make sure that at least one form of communication is always open.

Our FRG is going well and getting bigger everyday, according to Jennifer in the rear, and I truly appreciate the time you all give. The support you give us in the rear, not to mention the peace of mind, is greater than you can ever imagine.

I hope you all have a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Roughrider 06 CPT James Ritch

Greetings from Roughrider 5!

With one month under our belts, the Echo Company Roughriders have made it to our final destination in Iraq. After spending almost 30 days in Kuwait, our great Soldiers braved the Iraqi Highways to bring the unit's new up-armored vehicles to Camp Taji, our new "home" for a year.

We are settling in, and will begin to take over the mission from our counterparts in 3-3 Aviation, 3rd Infantry Division. A great optimism resonates from our company, and we are ready to make a difference by helping out in the war against terror.

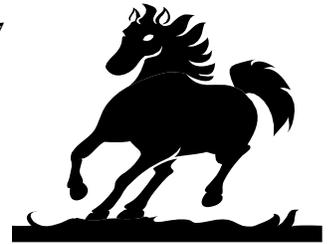
The Roughriders are ready to execute the mission before them.

Roughrider 5 out!

1LT Jonathan Perrone

Echo Company uparmored vehicles at a live fire exercise in Kuwait.





HHC "Stallions"

FROM THE COMMANDER STALLION 06

Families and Family Readiness Groups are and will always be the foundation for mission success. During our deployment I ask each one of you to take on additional roles that support the unit and the community, enabling your Soldiers to remain focused on the mission with the knowledge that all is well on the "Home Front." Every success accomplished by our soldiers in combat will be due, in no small part, to the untiring support from our families. I would like to thank each and every member of the Stallion Family for what you do.



FROM THE FIRST SERGEANT STALLION 07

The Soldiers of HHC have finally arrived in Camp Taji, Iraq. We are all integrating with the 3-3 AVN Soldiers to ensure a smooth transition into our workspaces. The Soldiers are pleased with the current living areas and are mission ready and focused. The Stallions are looking forward to the mission and bringing all family members back to their loved ones. Thanks for the support and we will see you soon.



1SG Bolden



We have just passed our one month mark in country and it seems like only yesterday we stood in the gym during the manifest process. November was a mixed bag of events that filled the first days of the month with a well deserved block leave, and upon return we entered the deployment phase of this operation. During the RSOI (Reception, Staging, Onward movement, Integration) phase of the deployment your Stallions have led from the front. The S6 section ensured that 1-4 Aviation was the first unit to have all communications established within the Brigade. During the month of December the Stallions also led the way during the training of all Up-Armored HMMWV crews for the battalion during the Convoy Live Fire Exercise training. The training allowed the battalion to deploy a ground assault convoy that drove from Kuwait to Camp Taji, Iraq without accident or incident.

November Birthdays:

CW4 Farrow, CW4 Heineke, MSG Meyer, SFC Potts, CW4 Smith, 1LT Tolin, and CW4 Young

December Birthdays:

SPC Bemis, CPT Craven, 1LT Davis, PFC Harris, SSG Logsdon, SPC Patterson, CPT Salvo, and 1LT Sidwell

Arrivals:

PV2 Kingman and PV2 Living

STALLIONS ATTACK!!

Respectfully,
CPT Byron C. Needum



Right: HHC Soldiers waiting to board the airplane at Fort Hood's Robert Gray Army Airfield.



Left: HHC Soldiers test firing their weapons at the range in Kuwait.

Dragon Photo Corner



Our sometimes rainy accommodations in Kuwait.....



.....and the rows of trailer billets we now live in at Taji.



1LT Speegle gets a rude awakening by 1LT Shouse in his protective mask.



LTC Rapavi and CPT Greene promote 1LT Welch of C Co to captain.



Battalion soldiers under a brilliant desert sunset.



SFC Sanchez takes a nap after reading up on field sanitation.

Dragon Photo Corner



B Co Soldiers in Kuwait, from left to right: SGT Keister, PFC Kelley, SGT York, SGT Kennedy, SPC Tirado, PFC Gosvener



CPT Greene and his C Co pilots form up before going out to the range in Kuwait.



Thanksgiving Dinner at the dining facility in Kuwait.



C Co soldiers conducting room clearing drills in Kuwait.



Our friendly Green Bean Coffee Shop workers at Buehring.



SGT York and SFC Lizama with an uparmored LMTV.